HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

495 hotels in Elbasan are the Grand Hotel and Adriatik Hotel. From Elbasan to Llixha is fourteen kilometers where there is a special hotel in connection with the thermal baths. The Hotel Colombo is the largest in Berat. The most convenient hotels of Valona (Vlona) are the Adriatik and the Gambino. The Palace Hotel of Korça is very nice and the restaurant in connection will satisfy the pallet of the most fastidious. In Argyrokastro (Gjinokastra) the largest hotels are the Savoja and the Royal. At Santa Quaranta (Saranda) the Piro Palas is the best. This latter city is the most convenient stop to visit Butrinto, Delvina and Himara for these three towns are all within a very short distance.

●265 There are countless large and small restaurants throughout the country—spotlessly clean—serving the most delicious, tasty food —American, European or Oriental.

264 least 15, with as many more waiting patiently for second table, and the dishes included a whole roast sheep, which the Major picked apart with his hands and distributed.

463 252 265 Professional cooks are found only in the towns and in new government stations. In Prizren and Scutari, many of these cooks are Turks and their dishes consist mostly of mutton with various kinds of vegetables. Personally I found this cuisine very tasty. They also make a fine *yughurt*. Pastry cooks form another special group, and concentrate on *baklava* and *kadaif*, the two honey desserts familiar to eaters in Greek restaurants in all countries. Although their products may be carried into the mountains, the pastry cooks themselves stay at home.

262 The mountaineers obtain almost all of their own food by farming and herding. Hunting provides little or none for most families, and the same is true of fishing. Along the Black Drin, just above Kukës, a few fish are sometimes caught, and welcomed in the kitchen. In Prizren, fresh river fish are sold in the market. But fish is an insignificant element in the Mountain Gheg diet. The same is true of wild vegetable products, shoots, berries, and the 594 like, collected by women. Furthermore each 261 family produces practically all of its own food, except for a little coffee and tea, and a bit of sugar and salt. Most families are too poor to afford these imported luxuries often. The significance of the absolute self-sufficiency of the Ghegs in their food supply is linked with local differences in geology, and must have a profound effect upon differences in physique attendant on diet.

241 [594] Farming is a family affair. The man buys the iron implements which he needs in town, and makes the rest of wood. He breaks the soil with a spade, and ploughs it with oxen. As he ploughs each furrow, his wife walks behind him with a basket of seed, sowing it. Later the women will do the weeding, and the whole family comes out to reap. If the crop is wheat, they cut off each head of grain with a sickle and put the heads in a bag; if maize, they pick the ears and braid the husks for drying. They thresh small grains and beans with flails. When the tobacco leaves are ripe, the men cut them carefully and hang them on their verandas or the sides of their houses to cure. -18b

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133 The opposite side of the valley - which appeared to be two or three miles in width—was bounded by a formidable chain of mountains still covered with snow in places unreached by the sun.

361 It was evening before we came in sight of Argyrocastron itself. Rounding a bend of the road we suddenly had a fine view of the town, which occupies three parallel ridges of hill at right angles to the main range, the highest of the three topped by an immense old Turkish fortress, black, rugged, and forbidding. On a fourth, and smaller, ridge is a monastery with cypresses. I have seldom seen a town so finely situated or so impressive at first sight.

The lorry climbed the winding road on low gear and drew up in an open space or square among cafés crowded with people. Work was over for the day and the Argyrocastrians 485 were taking their ease. In a steep cobbled street beneath the fortress ramparts I found an inn. It was merely a pothouse and the accommodation was of the roughest. I secured a bedroom to myself, however—an unusual luxury in Albania, as I have already indicated. The ground floor, with a door opening on to the street, served as restaurant, bar, kitchen, larder, and general living-room. It was furnished with deal tables and benches. On the left of the door was a desk whereat the proprietor kept his accounts. 265 On the right was an enclosed counter with a long metal 485 tray containing lime, on which stood pots full of meat and vegetables slowly stewing. The tray was, in fact, a kind of fireless cooker. On a shelf below the tray were clean knives, forks and spoons, clean plates, and an enormous bowl of

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yaghourt. The publicity of the cooking arrangements, 265
which is common to all Albanian eating-houses, has its 485
advantages. It makes a menu unnecessary. The foreigner, just as easily as the native, can see for himself what food is available and can indicate the dish of his choice by pointing to it. In the inn at Argyrocastron, however, the publicity went unpleasantly far, for hanging from a rail of the staircase was to-morrow's dinner in the raw state—a defunct sheep all ready for roasting whole, with a long wooden spit struck through it lengthwise. This revolting sight brought me to the verge of vegetarianism, but since Albania, like Montenegro, is essentially a meat-eating country, I realised that it was not a suitable place to begin experiments in a vegetable diet, and I was therefore obliged to stifle my better instincts and carry on for the nonce in the old carnivorous way.

One feature of the Albanian inns that the traveller will [462]
remark is the absence of womenfolk. All the household work is done—and usually done very badly—by men or boys. At Argyrocastron the "chambermaid" was an Italian-speaking Albanian, dressed in a very old and shabby khaki uniform, who spared no pains to make me as comfortable as circumstances permitted, and was exceedingly grateful for the few liras I gave him on leaving. In fact, neither in Albania nor in Montenegro did I find that distressing greed for tips which is so characteristic of countries which claim to be much more civilised. Before I left Cettinje, being 609
anxious to show my appreciation of services rendered by the

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Lorries

494 my calculations, and the fare, for a journey of nearly two days' duration, was after all by no means unreasonable.

The Albanian post lorries are of the familiar military type, and I came across no ambulance waggons like those in which I had suffered such discomfort in Montenegro. There is a good deal of traffic on these roads, not only by post lorries but by other lorries, which also belong to the State. A more or less regular service plies between Santi Quaranta and Koritza, the most important town in Northern Albania, with freight, passengers, and live-stock. I often noticed passengers sitting amongst sheep, lambs, and goats with every appearance of contentment. They did not seem at all incommoded. But in the post-lorries, fortunately for me, livestock were not carried.

361 Tepeleni, our first stopping place, was destroyed by an earthquake some years ago and it has never yet been properly rebuilt. At the present time it consists of an irregular 265 street of shanties made of lath and tarred paper. As soon as we arrived the lorry-conductor took me to a restaurant—a [262] lop-sided wooden shack with an earthen floor—where two yokels sat eating maize-bread and yaghourt, and a third man, more opulent, was devouring fried fish with his fingers. [524] Coffee was called for and, despite my protests, paid for by the conductor—little courtesies such as this being the commonplaces of travel in benighted and uncivilised Albania.

505 Beyond Tepeleni a river barred our way. There was a bridge, but it was in ruins like the rest of the village, and the crossing had to be made by a ferry. The roadway on

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In the Restaurant

"Good! Good! Dobro! Good!" Then he patted me kindly on the back. I could sometimes wish that all critics were as easily pleased.

With the exception of breakfast, which in mid-Albania is either a non-existent meal, or consists of a cup of Turkish coffee and nothing else, I got my food at a little restaurant[1] in the bazaar. Here, as at the inn, my demands were wont to cause astonishment. They could never understand my liking for maize bread, which is despised by them as the food of the poor, and, unless I made a fuss, always provided me with the stodgy imitation of French bread which they considered more suitable for a person of my exalted status. And when I asked for yaghourt, as I frequently did, the cook felt, I think, much as the head waiter of the Carlton would if one of the diners were to send him out for a penn'orth of fish and chips. Otherwise the food was what one usually finds in such places—all kinds of curious odds and ends of meat, partly roasted and partly stewed, oily beans, stuffed cucumbers, pilaf of rice, and sometimes macaroni. Now and then there would be caramel pudding, smothered in honey and much too sweet. The restaurant was open to the street, and, as it consisted of one room only, both cooking and washing-up went on in full view of the diners. The various dishes simmered all day over a slow charcoal fire, and there was no difference between dinner at midday and supper at night. The best drink was bottled beer from Trieste at three krone (1s. 3d.) the bottle, the wine, like all Albanian wine, being poor stuff. I usually found it necessary

[1] [in Elbasan -- Analyst]

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To the Land of the Eagle

265 to insist upon my tumbler being specially washed, and the table cloths were stained and crumpled and looked as though they had been used as bedclothes during the night; but for all that it was possible to get quite a satisfactory meal.

000 I was dining here one day when a young Albanian came in and sat down opposite me and began to talk. He had been in America, he told me, and thought it a wonderful country—such a contrast to Albania. Here what could one do? No money, no work, and—I knew it was coming—no factories! He cast a disparaging eye round the little restaurant and out into the narrow street. Then with a gesture of disgust he took up his parable again.

"A poor country . . . a miserable country . . . a wretched country . . . *but the States—*"

I could stand it no longer. "Look here!" I said, "I have been all over America and probably know it a good deal better than you do. If I had to choose between the States and Albania it would be Albania for me every time."

The fellow looked at me for a moment with intense astonishment; then, thinking, no doubt, that I was raving mad—or as he would have expressed it in the idiom of the country he so much admired "gone bughouse"—he got up and left the restaurant.

What I said may not have been quite literally true, but I was tired of hearing young Albanians running down their country—a country which only needs work and organisation